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A

SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF

DANIEL LATHROP COIT,

OF NORWICH, CONN.

WITH A BRIEF NOTICE OF HIS ANCESTORS IN AMERICA.

PRIVATELY PRINTED.

B O S T O N :

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The Western Reserve Historical Society.

from Wm. C. Gilman.

(grandson of Daniel L. Coit.)

Norwich, Conn.

March 9. 1905.





THE following sketch of DANIEL LATHROP COIT was read at a meeting of his children and grandchildren, held at his former residence, — now the home of his eldest son, — in Norwich Town, Sept. 7, 1859, the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of the town. It was prepared to be printed with several similar sketches of deceased citizens of that place in the published account of the bi-centennial celebration. As this purpose was not carried out, the sketch is now committed to print for private distribution among the members of the family.

J. C. G.

NEW HAVEN, 1860.



## S K E T C H .

DANIEL LATHROP COIT was born in New London, September 20, 1754.

*fourth* He was the son of Capt. Joseph Coit, for several years a shipmaster of that port engaged in the trade with the West Indies and with England. He was descended from a family who were among the earliest of the New England colonists, being the ~~fourth~~ in descent from John Coit, the ancestor who originally migrated from England, and who died August 29, 1659.

His mother was Lydia Lathrop, daughter of Thomas Lathrop, and sister of Daniel Lathrop and Joshua Lathrop, of Norwich.

*Joshua* After receiving an elementary education in New London, he came to Norwich, where he served an apprenticeship with his uncles, Messrs. Daniel and ~~Thomas~~ Lathrop, with whom he became afterwards connected in business. He ultimately succeeded to their business, of which an important part was the importation and sale of drugs.

In 1783, soon after the revolutionary war, he visited England, Holland, and France, passing the winter of 1784 in Paris, to acquire a familiarity with the lan-



guage, where he enjoyed the acquaintance of Dr. Franklin, then our Minister in France, and of the Marquis La Fayette, lately returned from his American campaigns, and who then, as ever afterwards, was pleased to manifest his regard for the country of his adoption by courteous attentions to every American.

Among the matters of interest witnessed by him in Paris was the first successful balloon ascension, which was made in December, 1783, from the gardens of The Tuileries, by Messrs. Robert and Charles; and he used to describe the enthusiasm of the French people at the success of this novel and bold enterprise, from which results were anticipated by men of science as well as by the public, which have so far been by no means realized.

After his return from abroad he became associated in business with the late Mr. Thomas Lathrop, who after a few years retired, leaving him alone in the business, which he continued for some years.

In 1802 he removed with his family, for two or three years, to the city of New York, where he was engaged in foreign trade, in partnership with his brother-in-law, the late Mr. Joseph Howland. At the expiration of this time he returned to his former residence in Norwich, where he passed the remainder of his life without again embarking in the hazards of commerce.

He had before this time been one of the original



purchasers from the State of Connecticut of that portion of the State of Ohio, known as New Connecticut, or the Western Reserve; and much of his time was subsequently engaged in the attempts at colonizing <sup>made</sup> <sup>journey</sup> and settling that territory, which he repeatedly visited <sup>the 'Rese</sup> while yet a wilderness. ^ Plans had, indeed, been <sup>1801-</sup> originally formed for an early settlement of the coun- <sup>1806</sup> try, but in consequence of the opposition of hostile <sup>1812</sup> interests, and of political causes which belong to the <sup>1815-</sup> history of the times, these expectations were for a long time frustrated, and the proprietors were subjected to a tedious and costly struggle in providing for the necessities of this remote region.

The means of transportation between the western country and the seaboard was naturally regarded by him as of the highest importance. He had while abroad examined, with much interest, the canals of Holland and of England, and he was among the first who conceived and advocated the system of internal improvements that have already overspread our country, and have abridged to an interval of little more than twenty-four hours, a distance which he first knew as a toilsome journey of as many days.

Before these improvements were commenced, he devoted much consideration to the possibility of discovering or providing some result of productive industry, of sufficient value to bear the cost of transportation from so great a distance. At one time the production





of raw silk he thought might prove available, and with this view he carefully studied the modes of culture and of manufacture abroad, and in use in this country. And in order to determine the point practically, with characteristic forethought, he procured experienced persons to raise one or two crops of the silkworm on a sufficiently large scale under his own inspection, having, fortunately for the experiment, an ample supply of the proper mulberry-trees at his disposal. The result of this trial, however, satisfied him that there were insuperable obstacles to its meeting the end designed.

In politics, he was a federalist of the old school, satisfied that our form of government was the one best adapted to our circumstances, only requiring to be administered by upright men, and in such manner as to interfere as little as practicable with the legitimate pursuits of the private citizen. But he took no active part in public affairs further than in systematically voting at elections, and occasionally filling the office of Representative in the State Legislature; obligations he considered equally due by the citizen to the public when called upon, for himself preferring the repose and unobtrusive pursuits of private life.

In 1786, (Nov. 23,) he married Elizabeth Bill, daughter of Capt. Ephraim Bill and Lydia Huntington, who *son-in-law* was a daughter of ~~Hershel~~ Huntington, all of Norwich. Mrs. Coit was endeared to her family, and a numerous



circle of friends, by her benevolence, her unpretending piety, and the undeviating sweetness of her disposition, qualities which cheered and brightened the residue of his days.

The cultivation of his fields and his garden, of which he was very fond, furnished him with agreeable occupation and healthful exercise ; and books, of which he never tired, were the companions and solace of his leisure. Chemistry, geology, agriculture, and natural philosophy, with all which he was practically conversant, were his favorite studies ; not, however, to the exclusion of the graver English poets, among which the finer passages of Pope, of Young, and of Watts, were stored in his memory, and which, to the last, he was fond of reciting. His well-filled mind and extensive experience made him a storehouse of information for his friends and acquaintances, not the less appreciated from the unassuming simplicity and modesty with which his knowledge was imparted to those who sought it.

In his social and domestic relations his character was singularly attractive and exemplary. Thoughtful and unwearied in preparation for every duty, he was resolute and firm in execution. Unassuming and punctilious in rendering to every one the dues and the courtesies of life, nothing could surpass his forbearance and indulgence for the failings and weaknesses of others ; while his disinterestedness, his sincerity, and



freedom from prejudice, united with a judgment ripened by a wide intercourse with mankind, gave a weight and sanction to his counsels that were often sought and were unobtrusively rendered.

He had the satisfaction to survive until he had seen all his six children established in life ; and he died on the 27th of November, 1833, in a ripe old age, and before time had impaired the powers of his richly stored and disciplined mind ;— with the consolations of a firm religious faith, not presumptuous or ostentatious, but in keeping with his character, — calm, deliberate, and resigned.

His widow survived him thirteen years, and died in New York, March 8, 1846. Both are buried in the old burying-ground in Norwich Town. Their portraits were painted by Fisher, and are still preserved in the family.

J. C.

NORWICH, September 7, 1859.



## ANCESTORS OF DANIEL L. COIT.

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THE Coits of America are undoubtedly of English origin. The name is still well known in the mother-country. Most of those on this side of the Atlantic have been traced to a common ancestor,—JOHN COIT, (or Coyte,) of New London, Conn. Of the time of his emigration, or the part of England whence he came, nothing is certainly known. He had a grant of land in Salem, Mass., in 1638. It may be conjectured that he was one of a company from Chepstowe, Monmouthshire, who followed to this country their ejected minister, Rev. Richard Blinman. Certainly he was a parishioner of Mr. B. in Gloucester, Mass. (if not previously), and removed with him to New London, about 1650. There came with him his wife Mary, his sons John and Joseph, and his daughters Martha and Mary. John Coit, Jr. soon returned to Gloucester, and was the progenitor of a line of Coits, which soon became extinct.

The father, who was probably advanced in life when he came to New London, died August 29, 1659. His will is preserved in Hartford, and the inventory of his property is recorded in New London. His widow sur-





vived until January 2, 1676, when she died at the age of eighty years. Her name is in the earliest list extant of members of the church in New London, which was prepared, Oct. 5, 1670, by Rev. Mr. Bradstreet.

#### SECOND GENERATION.

II. JOSEPH Coit (son of John and Mary) was a ship-builder in company with his brother-in-law, Hugh Mould; and also the first Deacon on record of the New London Church. He married Martha, daughter of William Harris, of Wethersfield, and from them the land has been overspread.

His children, so far as known, were six sons, viz: John, Joseph, William, Daniel, Solomon, and Samuel. Of these, all but the fourth and sixth certainly married and had children. Joseph, a graduate of Harvard College in 1697, became the first pastor of the church in Plainfield, and head of the Preston Coits. Dea. Coit died March 27, 1704, and his widow Martha Coit, July 14, 1713.

#### THIRD GENERATION.

III. JOHN Coit (eldest son of Dea. Joseph and Martha) was born in New London, Dec. 1, 1670, and spent his life in his birthplace. He married Mehetabel, daughter of John and Elizabeth Chandler, of Woodstock, and had four sons and two daughters, all of whom, except one, married. Their names were John, Joseph, Samuel,



Thomas, Elizabeth, and Martha. The mother of these children is famous, in family tradition, as a woman of superior abilities.

John Coit died October 22, 1744, aged 74, and Mehetabel, his widow, November 3, 1759, aged 86.

#### FOURTH GENERATION.

IV. JOSEPH Coit (second son of John and Mehetabel) was born in New London, November 15, 1698, and spent most of his life in his native place. A few of his last years he lived in Norwich, where he died, April 27, 1787, and lies buried. He bore the title of Captain, acquired doubtless by some sea-faring experience in his earlier manhood.

He married (1) June, 1732, Mary Hunting, daughter of Rev. Nath. Hunting, of East Hampton, L. I., who died March 29, 1733. A babe, named Jonathan, was born March 25, and died March 31, 1733.

He married (2) January 9, 1739-40, Lydia, daughter of Thomas and Lydia Lathrop, of Norwich, by whom he had

1. Lydia, b. June 17, 1741, — mar. William Hubbard, Boston, August 28, 1764.

2. Elizabeth, b. April 5, 1743, — mar. Chris. Leffingwell, Norwich, August 28, 1764.

3. Lucy, b. July 2, 1746, — mar. Andrew Huntington, Norwich, November 26, 1766.

4. Lucretia, b. April 15, 1748, — died unmarried.



5. Joseph, b. September 23, 1750,—mar. Eliz. Palmes; died Dec. 18, 1779. He lived in Hartford and Norwich. His widow married Capt. William Coit, of Norwich.

6. Thomas, b. July 17, 1752,—mar. Sarah Chester, and spent the latter part of his life in Canterbury, where he is still remembered with respect; died July 13, 1832.

7. Daniel Lathrop, b. September 20, 1754,—mar. Elizabeth Bill, Nov. 23, 1786; died Nov. 27, 1833.

8. Jerusha, b. June 21, 1756,—died unmarried.

9. Joshua, b. October 7, 1758,—mar. Ann Borrakil Hallam, and lived in New London, where he died Sept. 5, 1798.

Lydia, widow of Capt. Joseph Coit, died January 10, 1794.

R. C. L.

BERLIN, 1860.











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N. MANCHESTER,  
INDIANA

